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FROM USMISSION TO UNESCO

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TAGS: [SCUL](#) [ETRD](#) [EU](#) [CJAN](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: USUNESCO: CULTURAL DIVERSITY JUGGERNAUT
BARRELS TOWARD PASSAGE OF CONVENTION AT OCTOBER GENERAL
CONFERENCE

REF: A) PARIS 5185, PARIS 5417, C) PARIS 5116, D)

PARIS 4528

[11.](#) (C) This cable is classified by DCM Andrew Koss,
for reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

Is UNESCO in the throes of mass hysteria

[12.](#) (C) Summary: A picture is beginning to emerge of French and EU pressure on other UNESCO members to get the draft cultural diversity convention passed by UNESCO's fall General Conference and to allow the EU to play an unprecedented role in a UN organization. At the same time, in a recent series of speeches, French leaders have made no secret of France's desire to use the convention document to curb American audiovisual exports by removing ill-defined "cultural goods and services" from WTO disciplines. US Mission continues at every opportunity to point out that the draft Convention is a flawed document that is poorly written and contradictory and could be used to undermine human rights by giving governments broad rights to control access to culture expressions. Meanwhile, China may have already provided a glimpse of the future by using culture as a pretext to censor the media. Unfortunately, UNESCO's member states seem to be in the throes of mass hysteria and beyond the reach of rational argument. End Summary.

Whatever it takes to get the job done - and we've just seen the tip of the iceberg

[13.](#) (C) A picture of pressure and tools used by France and other convention proponents to gain support from UNESCO member states is beginning to emerge. The Kenyan deputy permanent delegate (protect) recently told us of a "workshop" on cultural diversity organized by the South African government at the Paris Hilton during the two days before the last negotiating session. According to the Kenyan, when he asked who was paying for the sumptuous event which included sit-down lunches, he was told by a colleague not to ask questions. (Note and comment: the Mission recently inquired about holding a reception for the General Conference in the same space at the Hilton and the estimate was close to USD10,000. We do not know the finances of the South African government but do find it surprising that they are flushing enough to spend thousands of dollars on such an event. It is easy to assume it was paid for by one of the convention's wealthier proponents, much as a Smithsonian conference on cultural diversity last winter was funded by the Canadian government.)

[14.](#) (C) The Kenyan also told us that in the run-up to the last Executive Board, discussion on the EU role in UNESCO, his president was demarched by the British Ambassador. Subsequently the Kenyan delegation to UNESCO received instructions to support the EU. The Ambassador of Afghanistan tells us his foreign minister was approached in Kabul. He also tell us that EU pressure and feelings of loyalty to the US really put his country in a tight spot.

[15.](#) (C) The Mexican deputy (protect) also recently painted a picture of steady high-level pressure on his government to support the convention. When Mexico did not fall into line during the last negotiations and took a reservation about article 20, the deputy was upbraided by the French Ambassador to UNESCO.

France pulls no punches - It's all about the U.S.

[16.](#) (U) Calls by President Chirac (ref A) and Foreign Minister Doust Blazy to the annual gathering of French

Ambassadors for passage of the UNESCO cultural diversity convention were not nearly as strong as that issued by French Culture Minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres in a July 19 speech (ref B) who made it clear (comment: despite claims to the contrary) that the rush to draft a convention has been about trade and thwarting the United States all along: "We are thus committed to a true 'race against the clock' against the parallel process of the signing of a bilateral free trade agreements that have been suggested to many countries by the United States and that contain clauses for the liberalization of cultural and audio-visual offers of service, as with the Doha Round underway in the World Trade Organization."

17. (U) In other parts of the speech to French diplomatic staff Donnedieu de Vabres issued a call to arms: "There is in the immediate future something at stake on which I ask you to continue to mobilize with the greatest energy: adoption of the convention on cultural diversity at the time of the UNESCO General Conference."

Brazil, dancing to a French beat?

18. (SBU) France has embraced Brazilian culture in a big way with its Year of Brazil. All summer Paris has been full of expensive and splashy Brazilian cultural events and culture minister Gilberto Gil has been a frequent visitor. Given the attention and money lavished on them by the French, it is hardly a surprise that the Brazilians have been among the most ardent supporters of the convention. They are apparently so sure of victory at the General Conference that they announced at an August 25-26 OAS culture committee meeting that they will be hosting a meeting in November on implementing the convention.

China invokes "National Cultural Diversity"

19. (SBU) We were given a recent glimpse of the type of mischief for which this convention might be used. According to a number of press stores, the Chinese government recently clamped down on foreign satellite broadcasts under the pretext of "protecting national security." Not coincidentally, China is a fervid supporter of the current draft. We have used this as an example of what the convention could lead to in conversations with our UNESCO colleagues.

We invited your lawyers to meet ours, but we didn't mean it

10. (SBU) The EU's invitation (ref C) to hold a meeting of lawyers appears to be window dressing. On August 30 Ambassador Oliver received a frantic call from the UK ambassador Tim Craddock who was concerned that the meeting (now scheduled for September 16) may evolve into something more serious than he intended. He emphasized that he certainly did not intend to open the convention to further negotiation as all 25 members supported the draft convention and did not share our concerns about article 20 or feel that it would cause trade problems. (Comment: Craddock seems to have gone out on a limb and might be in hot waters with his EU colleagues. It appears he did not really expect us to take him up on his offer. We also are incredulous about Craddock's assertion that FCO lawyers have no problems with the draft convention as it stands now.)

Comment: UNESCO the UN's 'Intellectual' organization

11. (C) Comment: Though UNESCO prides itself on being the UN's intellectual body, rational arguments are falling on deaf ears. The proponents feel they have a victory and don't want to let it go, no matter how specious it is. We also find among the supporters a general inability to explain what the convention does to protect cultural diversity beyond trade terms.

12. (C) Comment continued: Although France and Canada have been the primary impulses behind the convention, the EC could not have had a unified position if all 25 members had not agreed. The sad reality is that even some of our closer friends in the EU have gone along with the convention, though they knew they were putting themselves at odds with the US. The British demarche in Kenya is a good example. To the extent it is an excuse, we have heard from the Czechs and Poles that their foreign ministries see this as a cultural issue and just do not want to be involved.

13. (C) Comment continued: This orchestrated campaign has gone on for the past two years with unlimited resources provided by the convention's proponents and led by France and Canada who do not seem to care if this causes potentially serious problems for the US reengagement with UNESCO. Ambassador Oliver will be meeting with the Director General on September 2 and will strongly object to the both the process and substance of the convention. She will urge the DG to return to the original charge of the 2003 General Conference to provide a preliminary draft text.

OLIVER